crystal voice by bundyshoes

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Summary:

In her inner eye she sees waves crashing and a red and blue storm on the horizon. Her heart feels heavy in ways she doesn't quite understand and as she hears the rumble of an engine outside, the lights directly above her flicker. She's immediately at attention.

crystal voice

Author's Note:

- For assortedfruitsnacks212.

  > i love my bbs and im so happy to be able to write again, even a little bit, esp for them ~ 💕
  >
  > title is from ‘crystal voice’ by tangerine dream from the firestarter ost — def recommend checking out the whole soundtrack

Moving to Maine is a huge change for the Byers. For El, who hasn’t been to many places outside of Hawkins, it’s actually world changing.

Not only is she away from the only place she’s ever called home, but she’s in school now. She’s surrounded by other teens her age, learning as they do. It’s very much different from the homeschooling she used to do with Hop, but she finds she enjoys learning and being around her peers...when they’re not giving her weird looks for stuttering over full sentences or saying something strange and out of place, or just being quiet and staring.

But she enjoys the independence. Because she is so far from the lab here, Joyce does not mind if El goes outside or leaves the house. She still worries about their safety, but she’s not as strict as Hop was about *being seen.*

So El (and Will and Jonathan, because Joyce prefers no one goes anywhere alone) takes plenty of walks and drives around town.

And it's during one of these that she finally sees the ocean. It’s beautiful from afar and even better up close. She sees why Billy loved it so much.

She thinks about him a lot, ever since Starcourt. She hasn’t mentioned it to Will or Joyce, and definitely not Jonathan. Despite his sacrifice at the end, she feels like they still wouldn’t understand why.

Why he's on her mind, why she can't forget him, why she holds him in the same regard as Hop when she's mourning those she's lost.

When she's standing on the beach, sand between her toes as the rush of waves sings in her ears, it's Billy she wishes were here, not Mike. Her ex-boyfriend has been less on her mind these days than she would have expected. She calls every week, but the physical distance put between them seems to have given her some clarity on why she feels so emotionally distant from him.

The journey that she began — finding herself and who she really was outside the lab and Hop and Mike — has only continued outside the limits of Hawkins. She's not as lost without Mike as she believed she would be and that shocks her, despite the fact that it shouldn't.

She's not broken without Mike. He isn't a piece of her that would leave her dead if taken. She misses him, sure, but she's still living.

What she does feel, the missing piece inside her, is her powers. The place where she normally taps into them feels hollow, suppressed. She feels like she's missing a limb as she continues with her life with the Byers. She used to feel connected to the world through them, air crisp and freeing, and now it feels like she's underwater, the world muted and half saturated.

She remembers the buzzing of the upside down, knows it's still there beneath her and all around….but she can't feel it anymore.

Which is why she's shocked when the lights flicker in class one day.

She's listening to the teacher, she's actually interested in History and loves learning about what came before, but for some reason her mind keeps drifting. In her inner eye she sees waves crashing and a red and blue storm on the horizon. Her heart feels heavy in ways she doesn't quite understand and as she hears the rumble of an engine outside, the lights directly above her flicker.

She's immediately at attention, straightening in her chair. No one else seems to notice it and that fact alone has her hair standing on end.

The light flickers again, still the one directly above her, and again no

one seems fazed.

The section of her brain she normally feels her powers in begins to tingle, like something small is pressing against a barrier but it's still too far away.

The light stops.

She waits, breath baited, but it doesn't flicker anymore. She lets out a sigh, not knowing if it's of relief….or disappointment.

And then she sees another light flicker out of the corner of her eye. This one closer to the door.

Her eyes shoot to it, and she sees the lights flicker intermittently outside the classroom door.

Her mind goes back to her Mama's house, when Mama was trying to lead her somewhere to speak.

Her hand is in the air before she can really question it.

She asks to use the bathroom, ignoring the snickers and whispered comments around her — they're unimportant. She gets her okay from the teacher and she's up and out the classroom door.

The lights continue to flicker around her, following her as she heads to the bathroom. She pushes open the door, and the first thing she sees is the mirrors along the wall.

The lights are a constant flicker in the bathroom by this point, and for a moment El is back in the Sauna. Her heart squeezes and she can't move. Then, the lights stop...and a single line of the lights flicker all the way to one of the mirrors.

Somehow El is able to move her feet and she slowly steps towards the mirror. When she's a couple feet away, she sees something *within* the mirror flicker. And then suddenly…

She sees someone's back.

She recognizes those shoulders.

Her heart squeezes again.

“….Billy?”

She continues to step forward, this time her steps are almost tripping over themselves to get to the mirror.

He turns around — his wide, terrified eyes narrow in on her and she gasps.

Lifting her hand, she begins to reach for the mirror.

“El?” She sees his mouth move but his voice is muted. His skin is discolored, slime coats him, his curls look almost flattened and wet, and he has cuts on his face. She knows without a doubt where he is.

“Billy — *you’re alive?!”* she gasps, tears gathering. Her hand is still raised but she hasn’t touched the mirror yet. It’s shaking. He glances down at her hand, before looking back up at her.

“Where are you?” she questions, desperate.

He shakes his head, confused and lost. His mouth opens again but nothing comes out.

She glances over him again, before looking at her own hand. He follows her gaze, sees her still reaching for him. He lifts his hand to mirror her.

Her eyes connect with his as she inches her fingers closer to the mirror, but right when they both touch the surface, the light above the mirror bursts and a force knocks her back. She falls onto the ground, and when she pushes herself back up, she sees that he’s gone and the mirror is cracked.

“Billy?!” she cries, rushing back over to the mirror. But it’s no use. There’s no one there anymore. She hangs her head and pushes the tears back.

-x-

Later that day, after she gets home, she immediately goes to her

room. She hasn't been able to reach him again the rest of the day, despite her many tries, and she's worn out. The rest of the school day had been draining, and she's strained her neck looking for any other flicker of light. Will and Jonathan notice her quietness, but she just brushes their concern aside as just schoolwork getting to her.

She's hesitant to tell anyone else just yet about what she saw. She doesn't know how they'll react or if she can even prove what she saw was real. She knows her powers still aren't strong, if they'll ever fully come back at all. (she pushes away the pang in her heart at the thought.)

But she knows what she saw was real. She felt it. She felt *him.*

As she sits on her bed, she can't help but remember finding him in the Void during the summer.

He had looked so lost, so angry. It had been so natural to reach down and grasp his hand, to reach for him. And for a moment, she had.

Before the Mindflayer interfered.

She shakes her head at the memories, the loss they bring in her heart too much to deal with. Closing her eyes, she tries the breathing exercises Joyce taught her, trying to find her breath and inner balance back. Her mind is scrambling for answers, darting from one thought to the next and she just needs things to *calm down.*

She breathes.

In.

Out.

In.

Out —

A pressure. Against her hand. She almost jerks away, almost opens her eyes, but something inside her screams not to — to stay still and *wait.*

As she sits there, the pressure gains and suddenly her hand is lifting.

But not really.

She still feels her physical hand resting on her legs, can still feel the fabric of her pants against her skin...but she still feels the sensation of someone lifting her hand to hold. The sounds around her begin to mute, like she's going underwater. Her heartbeat quickens.

She takes another deep breath and tries to let herself sink further.

"El?"

She gasps and opens her eyes.

She's not in her room anymore, the world is black and the floor is a Void but it's the familiar wet surface she remembers.

Her eyes immediately connect with Billy's, who's standing in front of her with an incredulous look on his face, like he can't believe it worked.

She immediately stands up by pulling his hand and drags him in for a hug.

"Billy!"

She pulls back to stare at him. He's still looking down at her like he can't believe she's there, that she sees him. El can't help but reach her hand up to cup his face, the same way she did at Starcourt.

He doesn't look like he did when she last saw him, he has his leather jacket on now, but he knows her. He still knows her.

The way he closes his eyes and leans into her hand and exhales in relief tells her he remembers her.

"Where are you, Billy?" she asks softly, her other hand that's not on his cheek clenches on his jacket. "Do you know where you are?"

His eyes flutter open to stare at her. He shakes his head "I...I don't know. This place…."

He trails off, his hooded eyes haunted. She feels her eyes tearing up, but she pushes it back.

“Billy, I will find you. I promise, I will get you out of there.”

He just stares at her, his eyes sad but resigned as they rove over her face. His mouth quirks into a small smile. She stares back, her eyes softening and going misty. Her thumb caresses his face as her other hand cups the other side.

As soon as her hand touches his face, she sees the edges of him start to fade, and her eyes widen.

“Billy?” she cries, her hands starting to grasp at him, keep her there, but it doesn’t do a thing as he disappears before her eyes. She keeps crying his name, even after he’s gone.

Suddenly she’s opening her eyes in her room. Tears are falling down her cheeks, and she can’t help the sob that bursts out of her.

“Billy…!” she whimpers, dropping her head into her hands as she cries.

Author's Note:

> This scenario is something I've been seeing as possible for s4, and with some of the spoilers and such that have come out, I feel like some of this WILL happen (the byers going to a water town -- Maine bc it would be a HUGE reference to stephen king and even jaws too, which has already featured prominently on the show, Billy coming back and El getting her powers back through saving him, etc etc)
>
> EDIT: OFC IT WOULD BE CALIFORNIA DUFFERS I SEE YOU!!!!!!!
>
> I do actually have a blog me and a friend run on tumblr that goes into a lot of these theories if anyone wants to check it out -- its @strangerthings4theories, go find us and show us love ~